

Resources Information and Scrutiny Committee**17 September 2020****Report of the Director of Organisation Development & Policy****Management of customer feedback (including complaints)**

1. Purpose

This paper summarises the work undertaken between October 2019 and July 2020 to analyse the management of customer feedback including complaints, compliments and comments and makes recommendations for future delivery.

2. Background

As part of its work to improve the customer experience, and considerations of technical platforms to support resident interaction, the Communications & Customers area was asked by the Director of OD & Policy to undertake an independent review of the complaints process in Autumn / Winter 2020.

The review found that:

- In FY2018/19, the Council received 2,014 compliments. This was double the number of complaints (1,001).
- In FY2018/19, 63.6% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to across the Council within 10 working days. This response rate was slightly higher for Stage 2 complaints (70.6%).
- Last year, the Council adopted a new one-stage approach to corporate complaints for all directorates except Children's Services. This replaced a two-stage process which was previously in operation.

The current methods of delivery vary widely across departments. This approach does not optimise the opportunity to take a consistent council-wide approach to learning and improving from feedback and does not support the corporate reporting of complaints, comments and compliments.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) "Guidance on running a complaints system" document, recommends that all learnings from resident feedback – compliments, comments and complaints – should be fed into a Quality Management System (QMS) and adopted into future best practice. This approach is not always consistently applied under the current methods of delivery.

The current complaints processes can be confusing for residents: there are a number of different processes and timescales for response are not always clear, leading to further contact and possible resident dissatisfaction.

3. Where we want to be

- Ensuring that we are able to meet all statutory reporting requirements.
- Meeting the best practice recommendations of the LGCSO.
- Producing reports for management teams that are consistently used to improve service delivery and outcomes.
- Having a robust approach to learning from resident feedback, implementing lessons learned into policy and process changes to improve the customer experience.
- Welcoming feedback from our residents and having a clear, effective and easy to use process for residents to give comments, complements and complaints.
- Having clear ownership and responsibility for customer feedback at an appropriate senior level within the council, ensuring a 'one council' approach and accountability.

It is important to recognise that an opening up of the feedback process, making it easier to navigate and for residents to engage with us, may result in a temporary increase in complaints. This should reduce as the council implements meaningful improvements as a result of the lessons learned from feedback and supports our commitment to being an open, accountable and value for money organisation.

4. Statutory requirements for complaints reporting and discretionary reporting

There are two statutory reports required for social care complaints within Adult Care and Children's Services, plus a requirement for complaints to be included in Public Health's annual report. These reports must continue to be produced in future.

Additionally Children's Services and Adult Social Care currently report internally on both a regular and ad-hoc basis to support service management and delivery.

It should be noted that the LGSCO write to every local authority annually, summarising the complaints they have directly received about that authority and updating on the cases they have upheld. This contact is managed by Legal Services.

5. Current departmental processes

As stated above, all directorates except Children's Services standardly operate a one-stage approach to corporate complaints. Some parts of Adult Social Care have secondary processes for handling more complex cases (i.e. those which require an independent investigation to adjudicate).

The four council directorates currently use different systems for managing complaints (these systems are not used for handling compliments and comments).

Main software systems used today for handling complaints			
Adult Care	CCP	Children's Services	ETE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mosaic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flare APEX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spreadsheets and folders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm

Currently around 4.0 FTE support resident feedback processes across the council, with some specific roles and some people undertaking complaints resolution as part of their wider work.

The management of the current complaints policy, coordination of complaints at a corporate level and the quality assurance of data in addition to the annual reporting of complaints has previously been managed by the Policy & Research Team, whose time is not included in the above. Staff within the team also spend time signposting and handling various complaints which do not fall easily within one department across the Councils. Capacity for such delivery has been removed from the team and as such they will not continue to fulfil this role.

It should also be noted that the Netcall system, in place within Call Derbyshire, affords a number of reporting options that will facilitate and support a more robust practice for complaint management. The recent upgrade now enables email blending and workflow management which means we have the ability to prioritise between incoming complaints and those already in the system but pending resolution. This will support any improvement of the wider complaints process by smoothing the provision of information from Call Derbyshire and integrating with the procured solution (see below).

6. Channel Shift Complaints system procurement

The Channel Shift procurement exercise saw tender papers released in June 2020 which include the procurement of a technical complaints solution. The procurement of this solution was agreed by CMT and Cabinet in March 2020 to support more effective statutory and non-statutory complaints reporting and resolution.

This procurement will provide a technical platform for complaints monitoring and reporting. It will not address processes within departments which need to support the use of the technical solution or how we embed customer feedback as an organisation. To do this requires a review of current feedback management and agreement on how the organisation wants operate moving forward.

Any supplier of the technical solution will need to understand the council's approach and methods of complaint management over Autumn 2020 in order to implement the chosen system, so progress on the below is required at pace.

7. Options for delivery

A range of options for delivery were considered by CMT on 1st September 2020 and Cabinet / CMT on the 9th September 2020 (see below). Option C is recommended by both as the most appropriate model.

Option A: Use of the new technical complaints solution, departmental processes stay the same.

Under this recommendation, people who currently look after complaints will be trained to use the new system. In all likelihood this would see continued use of Department’s current systems, with the new technical solution used as an ‘add on’, potentially resulting in information being entered in an incomplete way and or duplicated.

Minimal change feedback model			
People impacts	System impacts	Process impacts	Other impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change – resident feedback resources continue to work within individual directorates. Colleagues are familiar with current processes. Training only required on the new technical solution. Reporting will need to move away from the Policy Team as the resources previously used have been removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal change – directorates continue to track resident feedback differently and duplicate information in the new technical solution as they see fit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline – there will be a threat to delivering statutory reports on time and there will be duplication on data entry. Difficulty in standardising processes as many people take part in the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued overreliance on individual staff with specialist knowledge. Lack of consistency in approach detrimentally affecting the customer experience. Failure to adequately reflect and learn from resident feedback.

- Staffing implications:
 - Staff will stay within both Adult Social Care and within Children’s Services.
 - CCP and ETE will continue to use existing resources as they do now: CCP may want / need to develop a more cross-department approach.
 - A new reporting mechanism will be required as the capacity has been removed from the Policy team.

Option B. A completely centralised feedback / complaints model

Under this recommendation, all staff currently involved in complaints on a full time basis would be pulled in to a central team. Any part-time handling of complaints within Departments would cease and resource created in the centralised team as required to manage the whole customer feedback process. The centralised team would be responsible for complaint reporting both at a statutory level and reported into departments under service level agreements. The team would work with directorates to implement lessons learned and changes to policy / process. All officers within the team would work across all departments. It is suggested that the

centralised team would sit under the Head of Customer Services (within the Communications & Customers portfolio).

Centralised feedback model			
People impacts	System impacts	Process impacts	Other impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident feedback roles centralised under the Head of Customer Service giving clear accountability. Opportunity for specialist skill development within the team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New centralised and standardised feedback system used by all directorates. Consistent approach to handling feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easier to gather and publish data as a result of using a corporate system. Consistent approach to reporting which is produced by the central resident feedback team. A centralised function supports ease of reporting, speedier resolution complaint timescales, escalation stages and dispute resolution workflows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident feedback elevated in importance within the Council by becoming a dedicated function. Pooling of specialist knowledge in one place. More efficient communication. Greater focus on compliments, comments and continuous learning.

- Staffing implications:
 - The full time roles within Adult Social Care and Children’s Services would move in to a central team.
 - Additional roles will be created to manage feedback, best practice learning, reporting and to add capacity into the Children’s complaints area.

Option C: Hybrid feedback model – Recommended option

Under this model, a centralised team would be created under the Head of Customer Service with both Adult Social Care and Children’s Services each having a dedicated officers to support their requirements. This approach would allow for a consistent approach to feedback, effective reporting and the implementation of lessons learned whilst maintaining specialist support for those areas of greatest complexity and statutory requirement.

Hybrid feedback model			
People impacts	System impacts	Process impacts	Other impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident feedback roles centralised under the Head of Customer Service giving clear accountability. Dedicated resources within ASC and CS, managed by the centralised resource but acting as complaints specialists for the two departments given the complexity of their feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New centralised feedback system used by all directorates. Consistent approach to handling feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top-down resident feedback process. Easier to gather and publish data as a result of using a corporate system. Consistent approach to reporting which is produced by the central resident feedback team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident feedback elevated in importance within the council by becoming a dedicated function. Specialist knowledge retained and combined. Greater focus on compliments, comments and continuous learning. Closer working relationship maintained with ASC and CS.

- Staffing implications:
 - The roles for Adult Social Care and Children’s Services will be managed by the central team but will remain dedicated to and within those services.
 - Additional roles will be created to manage feedback, best practice learning, reporting and to add capacity into the Children’s complaints area.

The hybrid model is recommended as the most suitable option for the council as it maintains expertise within complex department areas whilst ensuring we take a ‘one council’ approach and can report effectively, improve the resident experience and embed learning from feedback.

8. Portfolio representation

In terms of portfolio responsibility, it is suggested that the Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture and Tourism have feedback management included within his portfolio recognising both its cross-cutting nature and proposed position with Customer Services. Given that this is a council-wide area of work, each Cabinet Member will also hold responsibility for feedback and complaints falling specifically within their areas of remit.

9. Financial implications

The costs of the technical solution and associated training for relevant staff are being met by the Channel Shift project.

The centralised and hybrid model both suggest the potential creation of three roles to work alongside the two members of staff whose current role is purely complaint management.

Currently a large number of staff are involved in complaint process and reporting across departments but there are only two for whom this is their only role: most people carry out this work as part of their wider job. Whilst removing this work from those people and creating three additional specific roles will provide an efficiency saving for the council – as those many members of staff who currently process complaints and manage reporting will have their time released to pursue other work – it will be an additional ‘hard’ cost to the organisation.

Establishing exact costs will require the creation of role profiles and grading but it is expected that costs will be met either through a base budget bid or by top-slicing departmental budgets.

10. Stage two development

Once the revised customer feedback approach has been agreed and implemented successfully, stage two of this process will look at:

- How best to integrate with Legal Services regarding management of the relationship with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – clearly work will be needed within stage one to ensure that any new complaints approach supports the LGSCO requirements.
- Any required integration of Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) with the feedback management approach.

Further papers on this will be brought before CMT and Cabinet in due course.

11. Recommendations

- That Resources Information & Scrutiny consider the proposed approach, noting that it will improve the customer experience and a ‘one council’ approach, and offer any suggestions for alteration or improvement.

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